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## THE EARLY HISTORY AND THE NAMES OF THE ARAPAHO

By HUGH LENOX SCOTT

The Cheyenne and the Arapaho are the westernmost representatives of the Algonquian linguistic family, which occupied a large part of northern North America from the Atlantic ocean to the Rocky mountains.

Captain W. P. Clark, Second cavalry, U. S. A., in his able work on *Indian Sign Language* (p. 39), makes the statement that "very reliable tradition locates this tribe in western Minnesota several hundred years ago, meeting the Cheyennes as they (the Cheyennes) came out on the prairie, and for many years moving and camping with or near them, so that for all practical purposes they were one people, and the history of one relates very closely to the history of the other." While this is probably true, diligent research has not yet brought to light any tradition that definitely places the Arapaho in a territory farther east than the Missouri river; and in the scant early references to the Cheyenne east of that stream, I have been able to find no mention whatever of the Arapaho.

There are at present three known main divisions of the Arapaho tribe, viz, the Northern, the Southern, and the Atsina or Gros Ventres of the Prairie—often called in earlier times Les Gros Ventres de Fort des Prairies, after the fort of that name on the Saskatchewan. These latter were formerly sometimes confounded with the Blackfeet, with whom they were wont to roam; and also with the Gros Ventres of the Missouri, or Hidatsa, who belong to the Siouan linguistic family.

Since 1874 the Northern Arapaho have lived with the Shoshoni near Fort Washakie, Wyoming; the Southern Arapaho with the Southern Cheyenne on the Canadian river and its branches in Oklahoma; the Gros Ventres of the Prairies near the Assiniboin on Milk river, Montana. Each division has its individual name in the sign language of the plains.

Probably the first white men to see the Arapaho were those who accompanied the expedition of La Verendrye in 1742-43. These also first saw the Black hills and Badlands of Dakota, and the northern Rocky mountains. A number of tribes are mentioned in La Verendrye's report<sup>1</sup> as being near the Black hills and the Rocky mountains at that time, but only five of these can now be recognized with any degree of probability. These are as follows :

1. *Gens de la Flèche collée ou Sioux des Prairies*, the mention of whom disposes of the assertion, made by some writers, that the Sioux did not reach the Black hills until 1775-76.

2. The *Mantanés*, or Mandans of Dakota.

3. *Gens des Chevaux*, referring probably to the Cheyenne, the identification of whom will be treated at a future time.

4. *Les Beaux Hommes*, probably Crows, or Absáruka, who are said to have been a very handsome people. Catlin<sup>2</sup> especially was impressed by their fine appearance : "A Crow is known wherever he is met by his beautiful white dress, and his tall and elegant figure ; the greater part of the men being six feet. . . . The Crows are very handsome and gentlemanly Indians. . . . I have just been painting a number of the Crows, fine-looking and noble gentlemen. They are really as handsome and well-formed set of men as can be seen in any part of the world. There is a sort of ease and grace added to their dignity of manners, which gives them the air of gentlemen at once."

5. *Les Gens du Serpent*, readily recognizable as the Shoshoni or Snake Indians.

In addition to these tribes, La Verendrye mentions the *Gens de l'Arc*, the *Gens de la petite Cerise*, and *Les Pioya*, none of whom I can now identify ; but as it is well known by their common traditions that the Kiowa, Kiowa Apache, and Arapaho were in this northern territory in the middle of the eighteenth century, it is not improbable that these tribes may have been comprehended in the list.

The Arapaho have been known by many different names, usually given in their own language by interpreters from other tribes.

<sup>1</sup> Margry, *Découvertes*, VI, 598, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> *North American Indians*, I, 46, 49, London, 1841.

The French name, Gros Ventres, is first mentioned in the report of Legardeur de Saint Pierre, who wrote as follows from Fort de la Reine, on Assiniboine river, in 1751 :<sup>1</sup>

“ Mais mes forces me l’eussent-elles permis, la guerre que toutes ces nations avoient contre les Iactchejlini, les Brochets et Gros-Ventres, auroit été un obstacle insurmontable.”

This indicates that the Gros Ventres were in the Blackfoot country in 1751, and contradicts the statement in *Blackfoot Lodge Tales* (p. 224) that they reached that country early in the nineteenth century.

In 1789 this band again appears under the name “ Fall Indians,” the translation of their Cree designation, because they lived near the falls of the Saskatchewan. Mackenzie<sup>2</sup> says :

“ Next to them [the Blackfeet], and who extend to the confluence of the South and North branch [of the Saskatchewan], are the Fall, or Big-bellied Indians, who may amount to about 600 warriors. . . . The Fall, or Big-bellied Indians, are from the South-Eastward also, and of a people who inhabit the plains from the North bend of the last mentioned river [Missisoury], latitude 47.32. North, longitude 101.25. West, to the South bend of the Assiniboin River, to the number of seven hundred men. Some of them occasionally come to the latter river to exchange dressed buffalo robes and bad wolf-skins for articles of no great value.”

This information, coupled with the fact that the Gros Ventres of the Prairie and the Arapaho belong to the Algonquian family, constitutes the only record, so far as is known to me, that the Arapaho have come from the direction of Minnesota.

Edward Umfreville<sup>3</sup> says :

“ This [Fall] nation is thus named by us, and by the Nethethawa [Cree] Indians, from their inhabiting a country on the Southern branch of the river [Saskatchewan], where the rapids are frequent. As they are not very numerous, and have a harsh, guttural language peculiar to themselves, I am induced to think they are a tribe that has detached itself from some distant nation, with which we are not as yet acquainted.

“ This is another instance of the impropriety of the appellation bestowed upon these Indians by the Canadian French, who call them Gros

<sup>1</sup> Margry, op. cit., vi, p. 640.

<sup>2</sup> *Voyages from Montreal to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in the Years 1789 and 1793*, pp. lxx, lxxi, London, 1801.

<sup>3</sup> *Present State of Hudson's Bay*, p. 197, 1790.

Ventres or 'Big Bellies,' whereas, rather than being remarkable for their corpulency, they are as comely and well proportioned as any Indians.

"Though we have interpreters for all the other languages, none has yet gained a sufficient knowledge of the Gros Ventres tongue to make themselves understood, the general medium of conversation with them being the Blackfoot language, which is agreeable and readily acquired."

The same linguistic difficulty has been observed wherever the Arapaho have been met. It first came to my notice in 1877, at the mouth of the Marias; again at Fort Belknap on Milk river, and later among the Southern Arapaho, where the services of the veteran Cheyenne interpreter, Ben Clark, were generally brought into requisition because most of the Arapaho understood Cheyenne while many of their oldest men spoke Comanche as well.

Captain W. P. Clark, in 1880, speaking of the Arapaho language, said that "it is almost an impossibility for a white man to learn to speak it. . . . At neither of the three agencies during the past season was there an interpreter." I believe, however, that it is possible, though difficult, for a white man to learn Arapaho if he be willing to expend the labor in acquiring it, although it shares with the Kiowa the reputation of being the most difficult language between the Missouri and the Rockies.

Lewis and Clark,<sup>1</sup> in 1806, call them Paunch Indians and Gens de Panse as well as Fall Indians.

Alexander Henry, the younger,<sup>2</sup> in 1808, confirmed Umfreville and Mackenzie, saying:

"The Big Bellies, or Rapid Indians, are now stationed south of the Slaves,<sup>3</sup> between the South Branch [of the Saskatchewan] and the Missouri. Formerly they inhabited the point of land between the North and South branches of the Saskatchewan to the junction of those two streams; from which circumstance, it is supposed, they derived the name of Rapid Indians. They are of the same nation as the Big Bellies of the Missouri, whom I have already mentioned.<sup>4</sup> Their dress, customs, and manners appear to me to be the same. Formerly they were very numerous, and much dreaded by the neighboring nations. But since the smallpox

<sup>1</sup> Statistical Review, in *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 1, p. 717, 1832.

<sup>2</sup> *Henry-Thompson Journals*, Coues ed., p. 530.

<sup>3</sup> The term Slaves is applied by Henry to the Blackfeet. See pp. 523 and 533 of his journal.

<sup>4</sup> This, however, is a mistake, since the latter are the Hidatsa, a Siouan tribe.

their numbers have diminished very much, through the effects of that baneful disease, and in consequence of depredations committed upon them by tribes with whom they have been at variance. The Slaves [Blackfeet] have fought many bloody battles with them, though they are now on amicable terms.<sup>1</sup> They are a more industrious people, and commonly bring us a good trade in . . . grizzly bear and buffalo robes. In dressing these robes they are far superior to the Slaves and fully equal to the Mandanes."

Lewis and Clark<sup>2</sup> call them "Kanenavish" or "Gens des Vaches," and place them "on heads of the Paducas fork of the river Platte, and south fork of Cheyenne river."<sup>3</sup> They also say these nations all live to the southwest by south to the west of the Rickeries; all speak different languages, all follow the buffalo, and winter near the mountains. Henry<sup>4</sup> says the "Schians and Sioux — for the camp was composed of both of these nations, and a few Buffalo Indians" — meaning Arapaho. This camp was to the east of the Black hills of Dakota in 1806. He further identifies (p. 384) the Kaninavish with the Buffalo Indians, or Arapahos, as follows:

"Near the sources of these two rivers [one the Platte] they [the Cheyennes] make their annual hunts of bear and beaver in company with the Buffalo Indians or as some call them Caneninavish tribe inhabiting that part of the country they consist of about 500 tents."

H. M. Brackenridge,<sup>5</sup> in his table of the Indian nations of Louisiana, mentions the "Kan-ne-na-wish, — 1,500 warriors, 5,000 souls, a wandering people, on the heads of the Yellow Stone river." Also (p. 86) "Paunch Indians, 800 warriors, 2,500 souls, northeast of the Missouri near the head, trade with the British," but inimical to Americans; and the "Gros Ventres of the Prairie," northeast of the Missouri.

<sup>1</sup> This is somewhat at variance with the statement in *Blackfoot Lodge Tales* (p. 244), derived from Clark, to the effect that they were at peace with the Blackfeet until 1862.

<sup>2</sup> *Am. State Papers*, op. cit., p. 716.

<sup>3</sup> The Thwaites edition of Lewis and Clark (vol. 1, p. 190, 1904) has "Kun.na-nar-Wesh — (Gens des Vach) Blue beads." Note by editor on the same page: ". . . Meaning 'cow-people' — that is, Buffalo tribe. The Indian name here given — written by Biddle (1, p. 34) Kaninaviesch — is only a Chippewa appellation of that tribe, now known as the Arapaho, . . . (See Mooney's sketch of this people, in *U. S. Bur. Ethnol. Rep.*, 1892-93, pp. 953-957)."

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., p. 377.

<sup>5</sup> *Views of Louisiana*, p. 85, 1814.

Captain W. P. Clark (p. 40) and others say that the Northern and Southern Arapaho separated about 1868. The following quotations, however, will show that they and the Northern and Southern Cheyenne had separated as far back at least as 1816:

"The Shiennes associated with these wandering tribes, are a small band of seceders, from the nation of the same name, residing upon the Shienne river. They are said to be daring and ferocious. They are, however, kept under restraint by the energy and firmness of their chief. The *Bear's Tooth*, who is the principal chief of the Arapahoes, and the head chief of all these nations, possesses great influence over the whole." The Arapaho, Cheyenne, and others "formerly carried on a limited trade with the Spaniards of Mexico, with whom they exchanged dressed bison skins for blankets, wheat flower, maize, etc., but their supplies of these articles are now cut off, by a war which they are at present waging against that people. They also, at distant periods, held a kind of *fair*, on the tributary of the Platte [whence the name Grand Camp creek], near the mountains, at which they obtained British merchandise from the Shiennes of Shienne river, who obtained the same at the Mandan village, from the British traders that frequent that part of our territory. Last winter, they traded a great number of horses and mules, with a party of white men, who had ascended the Red river. . . . The Kiawas, Arrapahoes, and Kaskaiaes or Bad-hearts, had been assembled together, with forty-five French hunters in the employ of Mr. Choteau and Mr. Demun of St. Louis. They had assembled for the purpose of holding a trading council with a band of Shiennes. These last had been recently supplied with goods by the British traders on the Missouri, and had come to exchange them with the former for horses. The Kiawas, Arrapahoes, etc., who wander in the extensive plains of the Arkansas and Red river, have always great numbers of horses, which they rear with much less difficulty than the Shiennes, whose country is cold and barren." <sup>1</sup>

This also shows the Cheyenne to have been intermediaries between the British traders in the north through the Mandan, as well as the Indians of the southern plains, for horses in 1816.<sup>2</sup>

Fowler, writing in 1821,<sup>3</sup> says:

"It is but Justice to Say we find the Kiawa the best Indeans posssing more firmness and manly deportment than the arrapoho and less arrogance

<sup>1</sup> Long, *Expedition to the Rocky Mountains*, I, p. 502; II, p. 367, Phila., 1823.

<sup>2</sup> See also *Henry-Thompson Journals*, Coues ed.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal of Jacob Fowler*, Coues ed., 68, 1898.

and Hatey Pride than the Ietan — we Ware Invited this day to Eat With one of the arrapoho Cheefs He Seet before us a dish of fat meat of Which We Eat plentyfully We Ware then asked if We new what kind of meat We Ware Eating We told him We did not He then Said it Wa[s] a dog telling us it [was] a great feest With the Indeans — and that He Invited us for that purpose.”

The Comanche call the Arapaho *Sariet-tethka*, i. e. ‘dog eaters,’ a term of reproach. The Shoshoni have the same name for them.

Morse<sup>1</sup> thus speaks of the Southern Arapaho :

“Their number is estimated at 10,000. Their country extends from the head waters of the Kansas, south to the Rio del Norte. They are a warlike people, and often make predatory and murderous excursions on their eastern and northern neighbors.”

After Morse’s time very little notice seems to have been taken of them.

R. Graham,<sup>2</sup> Indian agent in 1824, testified as follows :

“The Arrepahas, who inhabit the country south of the Yellow Stone, and who are also erratic, and depend entirely upon the chase, are a tribe of the Blackfoot<sup>3</sup> Indians ; making the range of these Indians along the base of the Rocky Mountains, from the Rio del Norte to the Saska-tche-wine.”

Fowler in 1822 and Farnham in 1839 mention them as being near the Arkansas. Prince Maximilian of Wied (1834)<sup>4</sup> follows Mackenzie, and adds :

“They are well made, little differing in appearance from the Piekanns, and other Blackfeet. . . . Well informed persons affirm, that they have at present not more than 200 tents ; and from 400 to 500 warriors. . . . The Buffalo skins, dressed by them, are said to be now better than those of most of the other Indians. In the main, their customs agree with those of the Blackfeet, and they dispose of their dead in the same manner. They are reputed to be brave in war. Their language is the most difficult of all those of the Missouri and the Rocky Mountains. The Fur Company had not a single interpreter for this language, though great pains had been taken to procure one.”

<sup>1</sup> *Report to the Secretary of War*, 1822, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, II, p. 451, 1834.

<sup>3</sup> Gros Ventres of the Prairie are here confounded with the Blackfeet, with whom they only roamed.

<sup>4</sup> *Travels in North America*, 1843, p. 234.



In describing a visit from the Gros Ventres des Prairies, when they came in great numbers to barter skins for brandy and ammunition, Maximilian says :

“ Our situation was everything but agreeable, for these same Indians had entirely demolished a fort, on the frontiers of Canada, two years before, killed a clerk, and eighteen other persons, besides murdering several other white people in those parts ; they had, in addition to this, had a quarrel with Lewis and Clark.”

Albert Gallatin<sup>1</sup> has some account of them, as has Father de Smet, the noted missionary.<sup>2</sup> The latter says :

“ The Gros-Ventres of the plains appear to me to have the advantage over the others [Blackfeet], in being more adroit, more docile, and courageous ; but they are more strongly attached to their old superstitions, and are terrible *demanders*, as the Canadian employees here call shameless beggars. . . . [p. 256 :] They are improperly ranked among the Blackfeet : besides they did not originate in the country, they do not speak their language, and are different in many respects. . . . The Gros-Ventres of the plains are a branch of the Rapahoes, who roam over the plains of New Mexico, and those on the Platte and Nebraska rivers. They separated from the nation a century and a half ago, on account of differences between their chiefs. The Gros-Ventres gave me this information.”

Dr F. V. Hayden<sup>3</sup> says :

“ I have searched all the works within my reach, and cannot ascertain with certainty their track of migration. . . . At the present time [1862] the Arapohos are divided into two portions or bands. The first portion call themselves na-ka-si'-nin, ‘ People of the Sage,’ and number one hundred and eighty lodges. They wander about the sources of the South Platte and the region of Pike’s Peak, also northward to the Red Buttes on the North Platte. Sometimes they extend their journeyings in search of buffalo along the foot of the Big-horn Mountains. . . . They spent a large portion of the winter of 1859 and ’60 on the branches of Powder River, near the base of the Big-horn Mountains. The second band call themselves na-wuth’-i-ni-han, the meaning of which is obscure. It implies a mixture of different kinds of people of different bands. They number two hundred lodges, and range along the Arkansas River and its tributaries. . . . It would seem from ‘ Long’s Expedition to the

<sup>1</sup> *Archæologia Americana*, II, p. 132, 1836.

<sup>2</sup> *Western Missions*, p. 254, 1863.

<sup>3</sup> *Ethnography and Philology of the Missouri Valley*, p. 321, 1862.

Rocky Mountains,' that the Arapohos occupied nearly their present district in 1819 and '20."

The same writer (p. 340) calls the Gros Ventres of the Prairie "Atsinas"<sup>1</sup> and seems to think they separated from the Arapaho in the Platte country, but this is contrary to their traditions. He continues (pp. 340-41):

"When this division took place is not now correctly known, though we think it must have occurred some time within the last century. . . . For the last hundred years or more they have lived on the Saskatchewan and near the sources of the Missouri. With the Blackfeet they have always been on terms of peace. . . . Their language is regarded by the traders and Indians as the most difficult to learn of any on the Upper Missouri. No trader has ever acquired it sufficiently to carry on even an ordinary conversation. . . .

"In the year 1818, the Atsinas, having surprised and robbed one of the forts of the Hudson's Bay Company, on a tributary of the Saskatchewan, fled to the sources of the Missouri, where they passed the winter; but, finding no traders there to furnish them with supplies or purchase their peltries, they continued their route across the mountains, and joined once more their old relations the Arapohos. Here they resided and hunted in common with the latter tribe for the space of five years, during which time the small-pox passed among them, having been communicated through other tribes with whom they were at peace or carried on a traffic. This disease, at that time, destroyed about half their number, but secured the remainder from the next attack, which occurred in 1838. At this latter period the small-pox only acted upon the young, and destroyed numbers of them, but the chiefs and elderly men escaped, so that the tribe was not reduced to the disorderly and helpless condition of the Blackfeet and other surrounding nations."

Hayden continues to narrate that in the summer of 1823, the Atsina becoming dissatisfied with the country of the Arapaho, and longing for some place where the buffalo were to be found in greater numbers, returned to the Blackfeet. On their northward march they fought two battles, one with a large party of trappers under the command of Sublette and Fontinelle; the other with the Crow nation. In the former, while they maintained their position, their losses were severe. In the latter they were taken by surprise and

<sup>1</sup> The Blackfoot name, meaning 'gut.' — Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*, p. 244.

completely routed. In the two engagements they lost about 125 warriors, besides a large number of women and children who were taken prisoners by the Crows.

During the winter of 1859-60, Hayden, with Reynolds, remained at Deer creek, near Laramie, Wyoming. Here he met Friday, an educated Arapaho, from whom he obtained his Arapaho vocabulary, and of whom he speaks (p. 322) as follows :

"The early history of this man, as given by himself, cannot be devoid of interest. . . . He says, that at the time of the separation of the Atsinas from the Arapahos, they were all encamped together on the Cimarron.<sup>1</sup> The Mexicans usually came up from the south to trade with them. At this time thirty of the Mexicans came, and the chief of the Atsina band wished them all to remain at his camp. The chief of the Arapaho band said, 'Let half of the traders go to one camp and half to the other.' A contest of words grew out of this, and finally the Atsina chief stabbed the Arapaho chief, and killed him. The brothers and sons of the murdered man immediately killed the first chief, and a battle commenced, but the difficulty was settled before a great number were slain. The two bands then agreed to separate, one portion ranging along the South Platte and Arkansas Rivers, the other passed through the North Park to Bridger's Pass, thence along the mountains to the Three Tetons. There they fell in with the mountain trappers, with whom they had a contest, and were driven toward the Yellowstone,<sup>2</sup> where they were again attacked by the Crows, a large number killed, and many taken prisoners. The remainder escaped to the Blackfeet."

It will be seen that these accounts harmonize to a great extent. Captain Clark<sup>3</sup> evidently refers to the same occurrence and says that Little Raven of the Arapaho informed him that the return to the north was made because the Kiowa and Comanche joined against them in war.

It was at the time of the separation that Friday was lost. After wandering about in the mountains for several days, he was found by Fitzpatrick, a noted fur trader and formerly United States agent for the Arapaho. Friday was educated in St Louis, and died, it is thought, near Fort Washakie, Wyoming.

<sup>1</sup> That was when they separated after their five years' stay with the Arapaho.

<sup>2</sup> Compare *Autobiography of James P. Beckwourth*, p. 128, for an account of this fight in 1823.

*Sign Language*, p. 198.

Captain W. F. Reynolds<sup>1</sup> says :

"We are now on waters flowing to the westward and into a branch of Lewis Fork [Snake river] which Bridger says is known to the trappers as Gros Ventres Fork, the Gros Ventres Indians being commonly in the habit of passing by this valley in their annual trips across the mountains ; there is here also a Gros Ventre Pass."

Hayden<sup>2</sup> says the Arapaho call the Atsina *To-i-nin'-a*, "people who beg." Compare Father de Smet, above cited, and Mooney<sup>3</sup> who has *Hitu'nēna*, "beggars," and who says further that the sign for "big belly" also means "beggars," but it is not explained how this can be, and I, for one, fail to understand this interpretation. Chief Joseph of the Nez Percés, in 1903, gave me the Nez Percé name for the Gros Ventres, which means "belly people."

As to the sign for Gros Ventres, it will be noted that they are called "belly" or "gut" people by many tribes, and it is highly probable that this name was received before they obtained horses, at which time they were more stationary than they subsequently were ; that they resided on the Belly river, and this gave them their name (although it is just as possible that the river obtained its name from them) ; that they afterward moved to the falls of the Saskatchewan and were named Fall Indians by the Cree, probably at the time of the arrival of the Cree in that country. They were called "Gros Ventres" by the French and "Fall Indians" by the English. The sign might mean "belly people" or "big belly people" according to whether it was made with emphasis or not.

In speaking of the Arapaho, W. P. Clark (p. 43) says :

"I have been unable to ascertain why these Indians are called 'Arapahoes.' They can give no reason for it, and I have been unable to find a similar word in any of the languages of the surrounding tribes."

Mooney,<sup>4</sup> following Dunbar, derives the term from the Pawnee word "*tirāpihu*, or *larāpihu*, 'he buys or trades.' . . . It is not the name by which they are called by the Cheyenne, Sioux, Shoshoni, Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Caddo, or Wichita." He also gives (p. 953) "*Äräpākata*—Crow name, from the word Arapaho."

<sup>1</sup>Report, p. 88, 1860.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., p. 326.

<sup>3</sup>Fourteenth Report Bureau of American Ethnology, 1892-'93, p. 1013.

<sup>4</sup>Op. cit., p. 1013.

Clark (p. 38) describes the sign for the Northern Arapaho as follows :

“Bring the right hand, back outwards, in front of center of breast, few inches from it, compress the hand and partially curve the fingers, so that tips of fingers and tip of the thumb shall be near together, tap or strike gently the breast with the tips of the thumb and fingers, repeating the motion.”

This is correct, except the right breast as well as the center is tapped. Clark confuses this sign with that for “parent,” or “mother,” and deduces from this that the Northern Arapaho are the parent band, in which he is followed by Mooney (p. 954). This has also been told me by some of the Southern Arapaho, but from this view I am compelled to dissent, for the reason that the sign for “Arapaho” is made by tapping or driving something into the breast instead of imitating the drawing of sustenance out of the breast as in the “mother” sign. As will later be seen, it means something quite different.

The word “Arapaho” is foreign to the Arapaho tongue, which contains no *r*. The people of that tribe therefore cannot pronounce it correctly, invariably saying “N’appa” which they believe to be the white man’s name for their tribe. In searching out the meaning of obscure signs it has been my custom to compare the cognate words in the various spoken languages, sometimes with good results, oftentimes with none. All the languages of the plains have their dominant characteristics by which the listener can distinguish them even if in the next room, although he may not know a single word of any of them. The Cheyenne is low and full of the hissing sound, as *Omissis*, their name for the Northern Cheyenne. The Teton dialect of Dakota is liquid, from its many *l*’s, as *Oglala*, the name of Red Cloud’s band at Pine Ridge. Obviously, then, the word “Arapaho,” if an Indian word, must belong to one of the languages possessing the *r* sound, as in the Pawnee word *durahay*, “good”; or in the name of the Crow chief *Arapooish* mentioned by Bonneville. But inquiry among the Pawnee respecting its origin failed of result. Major S. G. Reynolds, then at the Crow agency, Montana, informed me in 1902 that “‘Arapahoe’ is originally a Crow word and means ‘lots of tattoos.’ It is pronounced *Ā-rā-pā-hóe* and it applies to the Indian tribe known by that name.”

The following from Long (1819)<sup>1</sup> shows the prevalence of the Crow language on the plains at that time :

“On the morning of the 14th, we left our encampment, opposite the village of the Pawnee Loups, and proceeded on our journey, taking the most direct course towards the Platte. Our party had here received an addition of two men, one named Bijeau, engaged as guide and interpreter. . . . Both were Frenchmen, residing permanently among the Pawnees, and had been repeatedly on the head waters of the Platte and Arkansa. . . . Bijeau was partially acquainted with several Indian languages ; in particular, that of the Crow nation, *which is extensively understood by the western tribes*, and, by frequent intercourse with the savages he had gained a complete knowledge of the language of signs, universally current among them.”

Long's statement would supply a reason for the adoption of a Crow name for this tribe by the whites.

White Calf, chief of the Blackfeet, and Mountain Chief, of the Piegan, told the writer in the sign language that their spoken name for the Arapaho meant “tattooed-on-the-breast people,” and described the process of tattooing, which was done in early times by means of several long cactus spines tied together ; with this implement they pricked, by tapping, the spot they wished to tattoo until it was raw. Powdered charcoal was then rubbed in the wound, which, when thoroughly healed, left an indelible sky-blue mark. Garrard,<sup>2</sup> speaking of these punctures, says : “The Arapahoes (an adjoining tribe, with whom the Cheyennes intermarry) have three equidistant punctures on the breast.”

The writer, in 1877, learned the Dakota name for the Arapaho — *Makpey-a-tó*, which means “cloud blue,” or “sky blue,” probably in allusion to the blue color of the tattoo marks on the breast of the Arapaho men. The Cheyenne name for Arapaho has the same meaning.<sup>3</sup>

In 1897, Left Hand, chief of the Southern Arapaho, spoke to me in signs as follows :

<sup>1</sup> *Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains*, 1, p. 450, Phila., 1823.

<sup>2</sup> *Wah-to-yah and the Taos Trail*, p. 105, Cincinnati, 1850.

<sup>3</sup> Since determining these facts it has been found that Hayden (p. 402) gives “*a-ra'-po-ho* or *-hose*” as the Crow name for the Arapaho, and Long (No. 62 in his list of signs, p. 386) has “*Arrapaho nation* — The fingers of one hand touch the breast in different parts, to indicate the tattooing of that part in points.”

"The name the Southern Arapaho have for the whole Arapaho tribe is *Hennanna i-yé-na*. The Southern Arapaho call the Northern Arapaho 'Red Eye,' also 'Sagebrush men'; the Northern Arapaho call the Southern Arapaho 'South Men.'"<sup>1</sup> We have a medicine pipe we call the 'flat pipe'; whenever a man smokes that pipe he is obliged to tell the truth (use it therefore to administer an oath). We use it in the Sun dance, the sweat house, and whenever we want to worship. She Bear has it now [1897]; he lives at Fort Washakie. It has always been in the north and was never kept south; we have never seen it.<sup>2</sup> They say it is kept by Gray Bear (not She Bear), near Fort Washakie; it is wrapped in skins of different kinds—otter, beaver, etc.; with it is

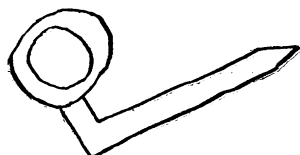


FIG. 36.—Arapaho medicine pipe, from a sketch by Sitting Bull.

an ear of corn and a stone turtle. This turtle is the one that brought up earth from the bottom of the flood and spit it out, thus forming the present earth. The old Southern Arapaho had some stones which represented the pipe, but the last old man is now dead and his wife keeps them; her name is Old Sun and she lives at Watinga. The

flat pipe was given us by the Father when we grew up as a people—when the Arapaho were first made. That word 'Arapaho' is a white man's word. We know the two signs for 'Arapaho' [Northern and Southern], and suppose that for the Northern Arapaho is because the Northern is the parent band. We do not know about the southern sign.<sup>3</sup> We make the sign for 'stomach people' for the Gros Ventres of Milk river, who are our people. We originated in the north beyond the Missouri river, and we became separated by the breaking up of the ice on the Missouri river—that is the way we left some of our people up there. After we came south to the Black hills we separated again because the Northern Arapaho preferred to stay north and we preferred to come south. We did not do it on account of any quarrel or unpleasantness; we came south because there were more horses and a milder climate. The others preferred to stay in the north; they are our people; we often used to visit them and they us. We have lived since usually with the Southern

<sup>1</sup> The Arapaho give no reason for the appellation "Sagebrush," but it may be from the general bluish color of the plant.

<sup>2</sup> Sitting Bull, the Northern Arapaho who, in 1890, spread the Messiah craze over the southern plains, made for me the accompanying sketch of the pipe, which was afterward confirmed by Washee and Black Coyote, Southern Arapaho, who had been on a visit to the north, and who saw it there.

<sup>3</sup> I have never seen any clue to the meaning of the Southern Arapaho sign.

Cheyenne. Our Sun dance is like theirs, but is held separately. We have a cottonwood lodge pole [i. e., Sun-dance pole] and have a buffalo robe on the pole. We Southern Arapaho have two divisions: first, Ugly-faced men; second, Funny Men. The first were so named because they had suffered from smallpox; their faces were badly pitted and they had ugly holes in their faces. The others were so called because they were a smaller people; they looked funny because they were so small.<sup>1</sup>

“We had soldier bands, graduated according to age. The lowest or youngest was called ‘Fox band.’ These bands were:

1	Fox band	5	Crazy band
2	Star band	6	Dog Soldiers
3	Tomahawk band	7	Buffaloes
4	Dance band	8	Old Men

“When a Fox boy became old enough he entered the Star band, and so on. We have different songs and different dances for each band. It is the same way with the Northern Arapaho. If a Star boy was about to go into battle he would want people to know to which band he belonged and would sing a Star song. There are no words to these songs.

“We used to have a great many medicine places; any place where there is a high hill or water by itself is a place where one can be helped by the medicine. We worshiped the earth also, but nothing beneath it. The very oldest people said the first people had a last rib of a buffalo for a bow, and for arrows had rushes, with leaves from an elm tree for heads; the shape of these leaves was copied afterward in flint, and finally they began to use feathers.

“The Northern Arapaho have two divisions, as we have, that usually camp in different places. One is called the ‘Spunky Men’<sup>2</sup> because they get angry easily, and often became angry at the other band, which was called ‘Antelope,’ because they never stayed long in one place. Before a Cheyenne or an Arapaho smokes, he says: ‘Sun smoke it first,’ then ‘Earth,’ then East, North, South, West. Some only say, ‘Sun and Earth smoke it.’

“The old Arapaho said the dead went upward; sometimes the dead turn into owls. Sometimes when there is a sick person in a lodge and a whirlwind strikes the lodge the sick person dies and his spirit goes out of his body with the whirlwind. When we see a whirlwind coming down the road, raising a vortex of dust, we get out of the way—it is a dead man’s spirit.<sup>3</sup> If I do not get out of the way it will take my life.

<sup>1</sup>This seems to point to the incorporation of several peoples into this band.

<sup>2</sup>In sign language, “hurry-up angry” or “soon mad.”

<sup>3</sup>This is a common belief among Indians of the southern plains.



“ The Southern Cheyenne believe that the opossum is another dead man. We call [in signs] the opossum ‘ shave tail.’ We call [in signs] the crane ‘ tall bird ’; we have heard that it carries another bird on its back,<sup>1</sup> but we have never seen it.”

From the above it will be seen that “ Arapaho ” is a Crow word signifying “ tattooed-on-the-breast people ”; that the sign for the Northern Arapaho does not mean “ parent ” or “ mother ” band, but has the same meaning as the word Arapaho itself; that it was the Gros Ventres of the Prairie and not the Blackfeet with whom Captain Lewis had trouble in 1806; that the first mention in history of the name Gros Ventres was in 1751; that this tribe migrated from the north in 1818 and lived on the southern plains with the Arapaho until 1823, when they returned to the Blackfeet in the north; that the Northern and Southern Arapaho as well as the Northern and Southern Cheyenne separated at least as early as 1816, and probably earlier; and that the Comanche name for the Arapaho, *Sariat-tethka*, “ dog-eater,” as well as the Shoshoni name, having the same meaning, are terms of reproach from tribes which do not eat dogs.

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<sup>1</sup> This belief is prevalent also among the Kiowa and Comanche.